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SECURITY INFORMATION

REPORT

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COUNTRY USSR (Carpatho-Ukraine)

DATE DISTR. 30 Sept 53

SUBJECT The Purchase of Consumers' Goods in  
Uzhgorod

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DATE OF INFO

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1. Under the Soviet regime the supply of consumers' goods in Uzhgorod N 48-40, E 22-187 has been insufficient and ill-timed. The public could never obtain seasonal goods when they were needed. The shops had summer merchandise during the winter months and winter merchandise in the summer months. For example, bathing suits used to arrive in the shops in the fall, and warm boots and heavy underclothing arrived in the summer. [redacted] the sports shops received ski boots in the Spring of 1952. Shop windows were filled with this unseasonal merchandise, but there were no buyers. As the people were very poor and living from day to day, they could not reserve enough money to buy out-of-season merchandise when it was offered for sale. This awkward situation applied to food purchases as well. For example, flour was sold twice a year on the first of May and the sixth or seventh of November. Theoretically, each family was entitled to buy three kilograms of flour semi-annually, but a member of the family had to be among the first in line to receive the flour because the supply available was never adequate to cover the demand. Macaroni (very poor quality and made without eggs), butter, and fat were sold monthly when they were available, but in restricted quantities on a first-come, first-served basis. Spices of all kinds were rare and available about once a year. Eggs were sold three times a year. Meat was available once a week. Shops sold rice once a year, if available. Often there was no fish to be had. Agricultural products were not

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available in the shops, except for fruit, potatoes, and onions. The products of privately-owned vegetable gardens and shares of the kolkhoz workers went to the free markets see below for sale at very high prices.

2. The directors of the various state-owned shops made a trip every month between the first and the tenth to the State Planning Office where they received written instructions, with three signatures and two stamps, specifying when, where, how much, and what quality of goods their shops would receive during the month. The shop directors were not permitted to purchase more goods than the quantity shown on the written instruction sheet, and they were required to make their purchases at the places specified on the instruction sheet. These orders were valid for only one month. In many instances a director was unable to obtain all the commodities listed for a certain month and, being unable to carry over the order to the next month, he lost the merchandise completely. This situation caused a shortage of merchandise for public consumption. To acquire commodities, it was necessary to "oil the wheels" all the way from the top-level personnel down to the lowest level. In cases where a shop manager would not "oil the wheels", the top personnel would send him away stating that they did not have the merchandise available, but even if the top-level personnel had been "oiled", the shop manager still had to "oil" the low-level personnel to obtain better quality and larger quantities of merchandise.
3. Insufficient amounts of merchandise caused runs to be made on Uzhgorod shops, and stocks often were depleted a couple of hours after deliveries, with the result that only about 30% of the population acquired any of these goods. Distribution was irregular, and sometimes at a stand-still for a couple of months because of the lack of merchandise.
4. The town of Mukachevo N 48-26, E 22-42 was the trading center of the Carpatho-Ukraine for both domestic goods and imported commodities. There were many storage warehouses there where commodities were stored and from which they were distributed. Goods reached Uzhgorod from Mukachevo by train or trucks owned by the shops or other state enterprises.
5. One member of each Uzhgorod family spent most of his time waiting in line for commodities. Lines began to form a day prior to the sale of the goods, for the population heard rumors that the merchandise would go on sale. These lines usually grew to include approximately 300-400 people, and before the sales were over the people fought, broke up counters, and made the place look like a battlefield. Sometimes the pressure of the crowd even killed small babies waiting in line with their mothers. Many pick-pockets worked in the lines, holding money in one hand and picking pockets with the other. The police were unable to keep order. Russians, Hungarians, Slovaks, and Ruthenians waited in lines together. The three native nationalities blamed the Soviets for the situation and the Soviets blamed the natives. The city presented a very strange picture in the early morning hours with people sitting, sleeping, and standing waiting for the shops to open. Black bread was in sufficient quantity, but the crowd waited in front of the bread shops until 7:00 AM, when the shop started selling bread. There was no rationing system and prices were fixed by the government, but because of the insufficient quantities of goods, the managers used to regulate the quantities of goods for sale per customer. Heroes of the Soviet Union, disabled veterans, and pregnant women were legally entitled to go to the counters without waiting in line, but often the economic police, political police, common security police, high-level Party members, and officials of the State Planning Office requested the shop managers to supply

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them with merchandise from behind the counters and through the rear door, too, in order to avoid the long wait in line.

6. There was an order from the authorities to wrap every article purchased in a shop, but the shops did not have enough wrapping paper to carry out this order. Customers used to bring wrapping paper with them, or they picked up the merchandise without wrapping. Salesmen in the shops were responsible for keeping order, and they also had to pay for any breakage of furniture, glassware, etc. Salesmen were often arrested in case of burglary. Daily deposits were made in the bank from the money taken in, and no money was kept in the shop.
7. Food shops in Uzhgorod received fruit and vegetables from the kolkhozy nearby. For example, if the manager of a shop wanted apples, he filed a request at the Trade Office in Uzhgorod. Sooner or later, the Office notified the manager in the form of an assignment that he was permitted to purchase a certain quantity of apples at certain kolkhozy. Then an employee of the shop was dispatched with a truck or cart from the shop to try to pick up the apples. Many times it happened that a kolkhoz named in the assignment had no apples, and in such cases the employee had to go to the other kolkhozy mentioned. If he was lucky enough to get the apples, he was billed in quadruplicate, with the quantity and the quality of the apples noted, the fixed price, and the discount, which was usually 10-33% of the sales price. After signing the bill, the employee transported the apples to the shop. Two copies of the bill remained in the possession of the kolkhoz office and two copies went to the shop management. The shop did not pay the kolkhoz cash for the apples. The kolkhoz and the shop managements sent one copy each of their bills to the state bank, where the accountants debited the account of the shop with the price of the apples and credited the account of the kolkhoz.
8. Besides Soviet ready-to-wear clothing and yard goods, imports came from Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Lithuania, and Lettland. There was a great lack of yard goods. If these goods were available three or four times a year, the quality was wretched. They were not sanforized or color-fast, and after five or six washings the color was gone. The best textiles came from Hungary. Quality shoes came from Czechoslovakia. Combs were imported from Rumania, and sugar from Czechoslovakia. The origin of the merchandise was marked, and 60% of it came from abroad. The quality of the imported merchandise was much better than the Russian.
9. The city had two free markets, called bazaars, controlled by the authorities. Anyone could offer for sale anything of his own on these markets, but it was strictly forbidden to sell or trade in products of other people or to make profit by negotiation of goods. The punishment for speculation used to be eight to ten years' imprisonment. The prices in the free markets were absolutely free and not fixed by the authorities. There was no sales tax on the free markets. People who had money enough could buy everything on the free market any time, for prices three or four times higher than in the state shops. Not only yard goods, leatherware, ready-to-wear clothing, and food, but gold, jewels, chinaware, furniture, etc., were available on the free markets.
10. The average income of the workers in Uzhgorod was 500-700 rubles per month, of which 80% was spent for food, and the remainder for clothing, housing, etc. The following list of consumers' goods and services shows prices in Uzhgorod in 1952:

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Black bread	145	-160	rubles per kg.
Dark bread		220	rubles per kg.
White rolls			.80 rubles each, if available
Macaroni	3.50-	5	rubles per kg.
Eggs			.95 each (two bad eggs out of each five)
Flour	3.80-	4.60	rubles per kg., if available
Beef		13.90	rubles per kg.
Pork		23.50	rubles per kg.
Veal			not available
Mutton		12.00	rubles per kg. (first grade)
Chicken (frozen)	14	- 18	rubles per kg., if available
Wild game			not available
Fish	12	- 25	rubles per kg. (second grade)
Smoked fish		46	rubles per kg.
Lard	32	- 46	rubles per kg.
Butter	38	- 46	rubles per kg.
Margarine		17.65	rubles per kg.
Raw bacon		35	rubles per kg.
Smoked bacon		46	rubles per kg.
Baked ham		56	rubles per kg.
Rice		12	rubles per kg., if available
Canned sardines in tomato sauce		9.70	rubles per can, net weight 35 dkg.
Caviar (black)		16	rubles per 10 dkg.
Caviar (poorest quality)		35	rubles per kg.
Sausage	42	- 46	rubles per kg.
Vegetable Oil		22	rubles per lit.
Salt		.96	rubles per kg.
Milk			not available
Buttermilk		2.40	rubles per lit.
Cheese	32	- 56	rubles per kg.
Grapes (in season)	4.50-	6	rubles per kg.
Apples	3	- 6	rubles per kg.

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Pears	3.20 rubles per kg.
Cherries	6 rubles per kg.
Potatoes	0.90 - 11.20 rubles per kg.
Onions	3.80 rubles per kg.
Sugar	9.90 - 11.70 rubles per kg.
Coffee	220 rubles per kg.
Tea	132 rubles per kg.
Cocoa	220 rubles per kg.
Chocolate	250 rubles per kg.
Bananas	12 rubles each
Tangerines and Oranges	120 rubles each
Lemons	4.50 - 6 rubles each
Candies	26 - 40 rubles per kg.
Verkhovina cigarettes	1.45 rubles for pack of 20
Kazbek cigarettes	5 rubles for pack of 20
Cigars	not available
Wine Naturalni	12 - 13.60 per lit.
Wine Kripljoni	16 - 18 rubles per lit.
Soviet Champagne	18.60 per bottle
Vodka Horika	45 rubles per lit.
Vodka Moscowski	51 rubles per lit.
Sweet liquors	48 - 60 rubles per lit.
Beer Shigulovszki	2.94 for 1/2 lit. bottle
Beer Moscowski	3.40 for 1/2 lit. bottle
Matches (small box, safety)	.15 per box
Candle	1.80 each
Electric bulbs	2.60 - 3.60 each
Men's hat	60 - 120 rubles each
Cap	25 - 45 rubles
Shirt	65 - 120 rubles each
Tie	18 - 35 rubles each
Shorts	18 - 25 rubles each
Long-underwear, cotton	25 - 35 rubles

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Socks, cotton	9	-	18	rubles a pr.
Handkerchiefs	3	-	6	rubles each
Gloves, leather	50	-	120	rubles a pr.
Gloves, wool	25	-	35	rubles pr.
Athletic shirts	14	-	18	rubles each
Ready-to-wear suit	750	-	1,500	rubles each
Winter overcoat	800	-	1,600	rubles each
Spring topcoat	650	-	900	rubles each
Yard goods:				
Men's suiting	180	-	480	per m.
Shirting	18	-	35	per m.
Summer dress goods	9	-	35	per m.
Better quality dress goods	120	-	150	per m.
Russian nylon stockings (Kapron)	50	-	60	rubles per pr.
Women's shoes	360	-	380	rubles per pr.
Sandals	180	-	250	rubles per pr.
Men's shoes	220	-	460	rubles per pr.
Workers' boots with rubber soles	120	-	160	rubles per pr.
Workers' boots with leather soles			280	rubles per pr.
Rubber knee boots	180	-	220	rubles per pr.
Bicycle (Russian-made)	760 - 900	-	1,200	rubles each
Bicycle (imported)	860	-	1,500	rubles each
Motorcycle			2,200	rubles each (for small motorcycle with 125 cu. cm. engine)
Motorcycle			4,800	rubles each (for 350 cu. cm. engine)
Radio sets:				
ARZ type, 2 wave lengths			220	rubles each
REKORD-3 wave band			360	rubles each
VOSTOK-4 wave band			760	rubles each
Super	800	-	1,200	rubles each
Photo apparatus:				
Camera (Russian-made)			130	rubles each
Camera (German-made)			1,600	rubles each

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Film	5.80 rubles per roll
Fire wood	80 - 120 rubles per cu. m.
Movie tickets	3 - 5 rubles each
Theater tickets	6 - 18 rubles each
Taxi fare	1.85 rubles per km.
Coal and gasoline	not available for private use

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